

## Cattle-Sheepmen Trouble in Wyoming.

Dr. Howard R. Driggs wrote of this incident in his works but it wasn't exactly right. This range trouble happened in the vicinity of Charles Thacker's saw mill.

About 1900, there was considerable range trouble between the cattle and sheep men in the Henrys Fork, Wyoming area. My father, Charles Thacker, and I were running a saw mill on a small stream called Sage Creek, just over the hill north and west from Henrys Fork. This creek was the dead line for the sheep. The cattlemen said, "Our ranches here and this range and cattle are all we have and the only way we have of making a living and we are going to hold it even if we have to fight for it, (There was no Forest Reserve at that time) and you fellows have your camps along with the sheep and can go any place with them. We are asking you to leave this country for us." The sheep men answered, "It is open range and we will go where we want to."

Some of the herders boasted a little, said "they were getting fighting wages", One outfit had had two herds on Sage Creek. The regular sheep-camp was there and the other outfit was just a light wagon to haul the tent and camp equipment. With this outfit they could go almost anywhere.

At the time Dave was using four horses to haul lumber. Had been out and found his leaders and tied up and was hunting his other team. The sheep men had moved the camp wagon over on the cattlemen's side of Sage Creek. Twelve men rode up to the mill and one said, "We want to borrow this team a little while." (These men were all wearing disguise costumes and were masked and carried Winchester rifles. The horses wore light blankets. Could see no brands or the color of the horses.) They looked like they meant business.

Dave's cousin was standing there when they rode up. He said, "Just help yourselves but watch that bay horse- he kicks". One man said, "You can come and drive them if you want to". My cousin said, "No, go ahead." Dave was just coming with his other team and saw those fellows leading his leaders off, all harnessed up. He said, "I thought there must be

something doing". They hitched the team to the sheep camp and pulled it back across Sage Creek and told the camp tender not to move over there any more. They brought the team back and said, "much obliged", and left. We didn't see them any more.

The next day a rancher was on his way to Evanston for supplies. Sheep were camped right on the The herder stopped him and asked him if he was going to bring back a load of ammunition. The other herd with the light wagon had crossed over and up on Hickey Mountain, pitched the tent and moved the herd up the mountain.

Dave says, "I was out hunting deer just before sundown and saw a group of 12 or 13 men, disguised as before, come over the hill from Henrys Fork and go single file around the hill toward the sheep herd on a fast trot. I got back to the mill just at dark and after we had gone to bed, a boy about fourteen years old came to us for help.

He said the cattlemen had shot them up. There were two men with the sheep, eating supper in front of the tent. The cattlemen lined up on a little ridge about two hundred yards above them and began to shoot. The herders jumped up and ran just over a little raise into the timber but one was shot in the arm. The other herder got him down to the other camp where they had heard the shooting. The boy had grabbed a gun and started up there shooting as he went but they stopped him and sent him to the mill for help.

The cattlemen shot a number of sheep and both camp horses, then tipped the wagon over on the tent and set it all afire; harnesses and everything. I saw it all later. The tim plates, cups and frying pan had bullet holes in.

The got the man who was shot in the arm to a doctor in Evanston, but he lost his arm.

This episode was kept quiet for a long time but one of the riders had a bullet in his ankle which no doubt came from the gun the boy was shooting promiscuously. They report his horse fell on him but they brought

the poor fellow to my father's place on the road to Evanston and stopped to feed the team. The poor fellow lay there, moaning and hollering all the time they were stopped. They were too late, blood poisoning had set in and he died. There was no doctor or any way to get one except by saddle horses.

It seemed the sheepmen thought the cattlemen were bluffing but they were afraid to go after their sheep after the shooting. My father sent a man from the mill to gather the sheep and drive them back across Sage Creek. I know these are the facts because I was there.

*Sent in by Charles David Thacker*